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ABSTRACT

A mail survey of students enrolled in distance education classes in library science and health education and promotion was conducted after the courses were first offered in the fall semester of 1991. The 77-item questionnaire explored attitudes, opinions, and preferences relating to the Intercampus, Interactive Telecommunications System (IITS), the two-way audio/video communication technology that links classrooms at University of Alabama campuses in Birmingham, Huntsville, and Tuscaloosa. At the end of the questionnaire, students were invited to include personal comments. Seven factor dimensions resulted when related questionnaire items were combined; these were: Instructional Administration, Teacher, Room Coordinator, Course Judgment, Empathy, Motivation and Accomplishment, and Video Technology. Students found that classes were generally well-organized and fair in testing procedures. They showed quite a positive regard for their teachers, noting instructors' interest in the topic, professionalism, and expertise to be outstanding. In addition, students were satisfied with the way the room coordinators cooperated with teachers and operated the equipment. Participants thought they learned at least as much in their IITS class as they did in a regular classroom; they also were more likely to have positive feelings toward their distance education course than toward more traditional classes. Students perceived that teachers were interested in their progress and were attuned to how well class participants understood the course material. Students themselves possessed moderately high levels of motivation and saw their IITS classes as offering them both academic and professional advantages. Students were fairly neutral in their attitudes toward and involvement with the technology itself. Most found that using the equipment became more natural as time went on. A number of written comments expressed gratitude for the system itself and the course offerings. (A copy of the questionnaire is attached.) (Author/BBM)

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IITS Students' Evaluation Questionnaire

for the Fall Semester of 1991

A Summary and Report

by

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IITS Instructional Assistant

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Summary

A mail survey of students enrolled in distance education classes in library science and health education and promotion was conducted after the courses were first offered in the fall semester of 1991. The 77-item questionnaire explored attitudes, opinions, and preferences relating to the Intercampus, Interactive Telecommunications System (IITS), the two-way audio/video communication technology which links classrooms at University of Alabama campuses in Birmingham, Huntsville, and Tuscaloosa. At the end of the questionnaire, students were invited to include personal comments.

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Students found that classes were generally well-organized and fair in testing procedures. They showed quite a positive regard for their teachers, noting instructors' interest in the topic, professionalism, and expertise to be outstanding. In addition, students were satisfied with the way the room coordinators cooperated with teachers and operated the equipment. Participants thought they learned at least as much in their IITS class as they did in a regular classroom; they also were more likely to have positive feelings toward their distance education course than toward more traditional classes. Students perceived that teachers were interested in their progress and were attuned to how well class participants understood the course material. Students themselves possessed moderately high levels of motivation and saw their IITS classes as offering them both academic and professional advantages. Students were fairly neutral in their attitudes toward and involvement with the technology itself. Most found that using the equipment became more natural as time went on. A number of written comments expressed gratitude for the system itself and the course offerings.

IITS Students' Evaluation Questionnaire
for the Fall Semester of 1991:

A single 77-item instrument was sent to a total of 69 IITS students at the end of the Fall '91 semester (53 students enrolled in a library science research methods course and 16 students in a health education/health promotion seminar). Items 1-65 utilized a common Likert-type scale, with response options of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The remaining items collected background information on the students. 31 questionnaires were completed and returned as of January 15, 1992, resulting in a 45% response rate.

Seven factor dimensions emerged for consideration in areas of Instructional Administration, Room Coordinator, Teacher, Course Judgment, Empathy, Motivation and Accomplishment, and Video Technology. In addition, solicited comments offered by IITS students are included as they supported, extended, or contrasted with the group means of the various factor dimensions.

The first dimension, Instructional Administration, consisted of five items which covered various aspects of the testing and grading process used in the IITS courses--in particular, the planning and execution of various administrative duties by the instructor. Scores fell in the general agreement category concerning the instructional administration factor (M = 3.61). Students found that, on the whole, classes were well-organized and that tests occurred at appropriate intervals and were returned "in a reasonable amount of time." Students most nearly agreed on the item which stated that tests covered the class material "fairly" (#19, 3.97). One student noted, however, that "[s]ometimes it was difficult to get feedback because instructors changed and the location of the lecture changed between U of A and UAB." This comment would seem to suggest that team-teaching especially should have clearly structured protocols for IITS students to give and receive feedback. Another student suggested that IITS classes be taught on a weekly rather than a monthly basis, presumably because travel considerations were greatly reduced by the system.

The second dimension, Room Coordinator, contained two items concerning students' perceptions of the room coordinators' effectiveness in operating the equipment and their cooperation with the teacher. Students indicated a fairly positive level of satisfaction with the way room coordinators did their job (M = 3.75).

The next dimension, Teacher, was made up of fifteen items which probed the evaluation respondents' attitudes towards their IITS teacher. More than for any other dimension factor, students showed a positive regard for their teacher (M = 4.23). Among a number of items which achieved high scores, those which addressed the teacher's interest in the instructional topic, professionalism, and expertise were outstanding (mean for each item = 4.74). As one student stated, "I realize that much depends on the skill and enthusiasm of the instructor, so the choice of instructors for this medium should be given careful attention." In regard to skill, another participant noted the need for instructors to be familiar with the IITS technology capabilities "before class actually starts," since, at times, information on transparencies was too small to be read off the monitors. (Toward this end, an IITS User's Guide is presently being completed for distribution to potential IITS teachers. In addition, actual footage of IITS classes in session, as well as a video overview of the IITS equipment, is available on videotape.)

Another dimension, Course Judgments, contrasted students' attitudes towards their IITS course with their perceptions of traditional classroom instruction they had experienced. The composite mean for the items within this dimension which concerned positive feelings towards their distance education course was 3.63. Items which suggested a greater affinity towards traditional classroom settings achieved a composite mean of 2.79. Several students mentioned that taking the course on IITS was not only convenient but also a positive educational experience. One stated, "I was pleased . . . to take this class through IITS especially because I live and work full time in Birmingham. Not only is it a convenient way to attend required classes, but it was a very positive learning experience." Another student said, "this was the most difficult course I have ever taken . . . . But it was also one of the most rewarding--I learned a lot. I really appreciate the IITS system--it meant a lot that I could take this course in Birmingham." Still another observed, "I am so enthusiastic about IITS that I would take all of my courses this way if possible." Distance education advocates should be interested to learn that the single item scoring highest in this dimension (#48, 3.84) was one in which participants said they thought they learned "at least as much" in their IITS class as in a regular class, an observation supported with comments given by students. (It is interesting to note that in a similar study conducted with high school students in distance learning classes, positive feelings toward tele-education (3.2) were closer to the composite mean achieved by items addressing a greater affinity towards traditional classroom methods (3.4). Factors affecting this IITS evaluation, such as the otherwise-limited availability of classes offered and their convenience to students, may have contributed to tipping the scales in favor of courses offered on IITS.)

The dimension of Empathy included six items which tapped respondents' perceptions of their individual relationships with their teacher. Students perceived their distance learning teacher to have at least a moderate level of empathy with them (M = 3.45), suggesting that despite the communication problems inherent in a technology-dependent system, the teachers were able to engender in students a sense of personalized attention and concern. Two items scoring highest in this dimension suggest that students perceived their instructor as being interested in their progress (#39, 3.87) and willing to repeat difficult concepts, etc. until students knew them well (#50, 3.94). One participant suggested that a toll-free number, presumably monitored by an answering machine, "could reinforce communication between the student and the instructor."

The Motivational/Accomplishment dimension, consisting of eight items, yielded a composite mean of 3.42. Items dealing with motivation (#04 and #14) had a composite mean of 3.55 suggesting that the IITS students' motivation levels were moderately high, though they saw themselves as being neither more nor less motivated than other students (#26, 2.87). Many students perceived their IITS class offered them both an academic and professional career advantage (#64 and #65, M = 3.76).

The last dimension to emerge, Video Technology, contained four items which offered a composite mean of 2.94. This figure suggests that, generally speaking, students were fairly neutral in their attitudes toward and involvement with the video equipment itself. Two students said they were bothered initially by the compressed video; one said she avoided watching the screen because the voices were not "in 'sync'" with it. As a whole, however, students agreed that using the equipment became more natural as time went on (#37, 3.45). At least one respondent felt that students "should be taught how to use the equipment" and

continued that "[a] failure to train students in the use of IITS equipment would seriously jeopardize the effectiveness of this format."

In a related area, a moderate number of participants expressed dislike at having to use a microphone to talk to the teacher and other students (#30, 3.35). Several additional comments about microphones and various problems observed in connection with them were made. One student stated that "[in Huntsville] the desks were totally unacceptable for this course--no room to lay out materials; the microphones took up some of the inadequate space." She continued that "microphone wires impeded ambulation and [microphones] kept being knocked off the desks." Another observed, "In Birmingham, we seemed to miss about every third or fourth word . . . . [The teacher] had to repeat himself over and over." However, those who noted shortcomings did not find them insurmountable or possible deterrents in considering future IITS course offerings. The last student quoted here finished by saying, "These problems, although distracting, will not discourage me from taking another IITS class. I am thankful the system is available. Keep 'em coming!"

The University of Alabama System
Intercampus Interactive Telecommunications System
(IITS)

STUDENT'S EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE
(factor dimension and composite mean per item listed)

WE ARE ASKING YOUR ASSISTANCE IN HELPING US EVALUATE THE IITS FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA SYSTEM. AS A STUDENT WHO HAS BEEN TAUGHT ON THE IITS, YOU HAVE MUCH TO OFFER THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA BY COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE; YOUR INSIGHTS WILL BE VERY USEFUL AND GREATLY APPRECIATED.

ALL RESPONSES ARE VOLUNTARY AND ANONYMOUS AND IN NO WAY WILL AFFECT YOUR COURSE WORK. TO GIVE YOUR FAIR ASSESSMENT OF THE IITS, PLEASE CONSIDER EACH QUESTION CAREFULLY AND GIVE YOUR HONEST OPINION.

MAKE YOUR RESPONSES TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE COMPUTER-CODED ANSWER SHEET PROVIDED.

ON SIDE TWO OF THE COMPUTER SCORING SHEET IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE CORRECT MARKING PROCEDURE.

USE ONLY A BLACK LEAD #2 PENCIL.

WORK CAREFULLY AND BE SURE THAT THE NUMBER OF THE QUESTION ON THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE NUMBER ON THE ANSWER SHEET ARE THE SAME.

FOR THE FIRST SET OF QUESTIONS, PLEASE NOTE WHETHER YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT PROVIDED USING THE FOLLOWING SCALE:

A (or 1)	=	STRONGLY AGREE	(For this version mean scores were reversed to correlate high score with "agree"-ment)
B (or 2)	=	AGREE	
C (or 3)	=	NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE (NEUTRAL)	
D (or 4)	=	DISAGREE	
E (or 5)	=	STRONGLY DISAGREE	

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. (IF YOU SKIP A QUESTION IT IS EASY TO GET OUT OF SEQUENCE.)

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

A(1)=STRONGLY AGREE, B(2)=AGREE, C(3)=NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE, D(4)=DISAGREE, E(5)=STRONGLY DISAGREE

4.73	1.	This was my first distance education course.
4.83	2.	This was my first interactive distance education course.
4.87	3.	This was my first televised interactive distance education course.
MA 3.77	4.	I really wanted to take this course.
4.23	5.	I took this course because it is required in my course of study.
CJ 3.55	6.	I would like to register for more IITS courses in my field if they are available.
2.87	7.	I took this IITS course, because the campus where I took the course did not have one like it offered at that location.
3.94	8.	The campus where I took the course seemed to be committed to the IITS system.
1.71	9.	Extra materials for this course cost me more money than those for a regular course would.
4.26	10.	Course materials and textbooks were readily available.
4.10	11.	The cost of this course to the students was reasonable.
I 3.90	12.	This class was well organized.
RC 3.97	13.	The room coordinator and teacher cooperated very well.
MA 3.32	14.	I looked forward to coming to this class.
MA 3.55	15.	I told my friends and colleagues how much I have learned in this class.
2.35	16.	Taking this IITS course has caused me to use the library more often than I would normally.
I 3.45	17.	The papers and tests for this course were graded and returned in a reasonable amount of time.
I 3.39	18.	I was tested often enough for the teacher to get good feedback on my progress.

A(1)=STRONGLY AGREE, B(2)=AGREE, C(3)=NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE, D(4)=DISAGREE, E(5)=STRONGLY DISAGREE

I	3.97	19.	I thought the tests covered the material we studied in class fairly.
CJ	3.16	20.	I think I would have learned more if I had taken this course in a regular classroom setting.
CJ	2.42	21.	I think I would have gotten a better grade if I had taken this course in a regular classroom setting.
CJ	3.35	22.	This course met my expectations.
CJ	3.77	23.	I feel I learned a great deal in this IITS course.
	3.58	24.	My experience with this IITS course increased my desire to continue studies in my field.
T	3.23	25.	My IITS teacher was better prepared than those of courses normally available in a classroom.
	2.87	26.	People who take IITS courses are more motivated than other students.
	4.06	27.	Televised courses give students an advantage over those who don't have the course material available any other way.
	3.58	28.	Most of the time the technological elements of the course worked quite well.
V	2.45	29.	I have used the equipment to show my work to other students at other sites.
	3.35	30.	I disliked having to speak into the microphone to talk to the teacher or another student at a remote site.
V	2.81	31.	Using the equipment and speaking on the microphone has helped me be more confident about speaking in front of others.
	3.39	32.	I didn't ask questions in this class I might have asked in a normal classroom situation.
RC	3.52	33.	The room coordinator was effective in using the equipment in a way which made learning easier.
T	3.81	34.	The teacher was effective in using the equipment in a way which made learning easier.

A(1)=STRONGLY AGREE, B(2)=AGREE, C(3)=NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE, D(4)=DISAGREE, E(5)=STRONGLY DISAGREE

T	3.10	35.	The instructor encouraged us to use the equipment so we would get used to it.
V	3.03	36.	We felt free to volunteer to use the equipment.
V	3.45	37.	Using the equipment became more natural as time went on.
E	2.55	38.	There were so many students in my class that there was no time for individual attention from the instructor.
E	3.87	39.	My instructor was interested in my progress in this class.
			My instructor was
T	4.48	40.	enthusiastic
T	4.74	41.	interested in the topic
T	4.74	42.	professional
T	4.55	43.	committed
T	4.26	44.	organized
T	4.48	45.	good humored
T	4.26	46.	supportive
T	4.74	47.	expert on the topic
CJ	3.84	48.	I think I learned at least as much in my IITS class as I do in a regular class.
T	4.45	49.	The instructor presented material visually when it was appropriate to do so.
E	3.94	50.	The teacher repeated difficult concepts, processes, etc., until we knew them well.
I	3.35	51.	The teacher gave me adequate feedback on papers/exams.
E	3.29	52.	I could always tell exactly what my teacher expected of me.
T	4.26	53.	My teacher used many types of visual materials (that is, diagrams, pictures, charts, etc.) to explain concepts.

A(1)=STRONGLY AGREE, B(2)=AGREE, C(3)=NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE, D(4)=DISAGREE, E(5)=STRONGLY DISAGREE

E 3.68 54. There was sufficient time in class to ask questions.

T 4.06 55. My teacher encouraged us to ask him/her questions.

E 3.45 56. I felt like my teacher knew me personally.

T 4.29 57. I really liked my instructor.

4.06 58. I have made new friends by taking this course.

3.55 59. I have more confidence now in my scholastic abilities than I did before I took this course.

3.87 60. I think that through the IITS it is more possible to be part of a larger scholarly community than it is through regular classroom courses.

2.94 61. This IITS course made me aware of jobs I could do of which I was not previously aware.

MA 2.84 62. My ideas about what jobs are available in my interest area have changed since I took this course.

MA 2.97 63. I would like to take more college classes on the same topic as my IITS course.

MA 3.71 64. This course will be advantageous to my academic career.

MA 3.81 65. This course will be advantageous to my professional career.

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE THESE QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO THE FOLLOWING SCALE:

A (or 1) = YES

B (or 2) = NO

66. Did you take your <u>IITS</u> class in the same room with the teacher.

YES	NO
32.3%	67.7%

Do your regular instructors (other than IITS) use the following in class?

67. Videos?

YES	NO
61.3%	35.5%

A(1)=STRONGLY AGREE, B(2)=AGREE, C(3)=NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE, D(4)=DISAGREE, E(5)=STRONGLY DISAGREE

68.	Films?	YES	NO
		32.3%	64.5%
69.	Computers?	YES	NO
		58.1%	38.7%
70.	Audio tapes?	YES	NO
		12.9%	83.9%

THE REMAINING ITEMS USE ANSWERS WHICH ARE SPECIFIED AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH STATEMENT OR QUESTION. PLEASE CONTINUE TO USE THE ANSWER SHEET TO RECORD YOUR RESPONSES.

71. Do you find that you pay <u>less</u> attention, <u>as much</u> attention, or <u>more</u> attention to your IITS instructor as to regular classroom instructors?

22.6%	A (or 1)	LESS ATTENTION
32.3%	B (or 2)	AS MUCH ATTENTION
45.2%	C (or 3)	MORE ATTENTION

72. Are you a graduate or undergraduate student?

96.8%	A (or 1)	GRADUATE
3.2%	B (or 2)	UNDERGRADUATE

73. What is your overall grade point average?

----	A (or 1)	UNDER 2.5
3.2%	B (or 2)	FROM 2.5 TO 3.0
16.1%	C (or 3)	FROM 3.0 TO 3.5
51.6%	D (or 4)	FROM 3.5 TO 4.0
25.8%	E (or 5)	4.0

74. What grade do you expect to receive in this class?

74.2%	A (or 1)
19.4%	B (or 2)
----	C (or 3)
----	D (or 4)
----	F (or 5)

75. What is your age?

----	A (or 1)	UNDER 20
22.6%	B (or 2)	21-25
16.1%	C (or 3)	26-30
12.9%	D (or 4)	31-35
41.9%	E (or 5)	36 OR OLDER

76. What is your gender?

80.6%	A (or 1)	FEMALE
12.9%	B (or 2)	MALE

77. What was the general subject area of the course you took on IITS? (for example, engineering) WRITE AN ANSWER ON THE BLANK SPACE PROVIDED.

_____

A(1)=STRONGLY AGREE, B(2)=AGREE, C(3)=NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE, D(4)=DISAGREE, E(5)=STRONGLY DISAGREE

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE ON THE BACK OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE IITS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY WELCOMED.